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SUBJECT: (C) WESTERN SAHARA: BOUTEFLLIKA TELLS A/S WELCH  
ALGERIA WILL NEVER DESTABILIZE MOROCCO

Classified By: Ambassador Richard W. Erdman, Reason 1.4 (b) (d)

SUMMARY

1. (C) President Bouteflika reviewed for NEA A/S Welch March 14 Algeria's views on the Western Sahara. Covering largely familiar ground, Bouteflika stressed that resolving the Western Sahara conflict is the UN's responsibility; that Algeria will never negotiate with Morocco on the Sahrawis' behalf, rather the negotiations must be between Morocco and the Polisario; there is no bilateral problem between Morocco and Algeria; and the Western Sahara will never be a casus belli for Algeria. While Bouteflika cautioned that a "victor-vanquished" outcome would damage Moroccan-Algerian relations for a long time to come, he also assured A/S Welch that Algeria considers Morocco's stability as its own, and regards Morocco's stability as depending on the continuation of the monarchy. In this regard, Bouteflika affirmed that "Algeria will never destabilize Morocco." End Summary.

"ALGERIA ACCEPTED BAKER PLAN SO THAT  
POLISARIO WOULD NOT REJECT IT"

2. (C) Toward the end of a two-hour meeting with NEA A/S David Welch March 14, President Bouteflika raised the Western Sahara. Reviewing familiar points, Bouteflika recalled President Bush's 2001 request to him to fully support James Baker's efforts, noting that Algeria had done so. Bouteflika said Algeria had supported the Baker Plan so that Polisario would not reject it. Now, however, Morocco claimed the problem was one between Morocco and Algeria. While Algeria would be delighted if Morocco could find a solution with the Polisario, Bouteflika insisted that Algeria was not a direct party to the dispute and would not negotiate on the Sahrawis' behalf.

3. (C) Bouteflika went on to state that the UN was responsible for the issue. If the UN could find a solution based on UNSCR 1514, "I will be the first to thank them." If the UN was not serious, however, Bouteflika said he would go to New York himself to tell the Security Council that Algeria would always support the Sahrawis' right to self-determination. As many as 74 countries had recognized the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic. Morocco could not ignore the Polisario.

MOROCCO'S PARTNER MUST BE POLISARIO

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14. (C) Bouteflika said there could never be Algerian-Moroccan negotiations to resolve the problem and the Polisario was Morocco's partner in finding a solution. Aside from that, there were no bilateral problems between Morocco and Algeria. No one should expect Algeria to "lose its honor" by engaging Morocco bilaterally on the Western Sahara. If there were a settlement that made Morocco the victor and the Polisario the vanquished, this would make Moroccan-Algerian relations "very difficult" for a long time to come. Bouteflika assured A/S Welch, as he has said repeatedly in the past, that the Western Sahara would not be a casus belli for Algeria.

ALGERIA'S STABILITY DEPENDS ON MOROCCO'S

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15. (C) Bouteflika complained about French support for Morocco, noting that France's attitude had become a problem for Algerian-French relations. The solution was with the UN, not in Algiers nor in Rabat (i.e. Rabat could not impose a settlement). Despite these concerns, Bouteflika stated, returning to a policy line that has not been heard here since Morocco's abrupt cancellation of PM Ouyahia's visit almost a year ago, that Algeria's stability depended on Morocco's, and the stability of Morocco depended on the continuation of the monarchy. "Algeria will never destabilize Morocco," Bouteflika stressed.

16. (C) Bouteflika asked the U.S. not to confuse Polisario with a terrorist organization. Polisario has accepted and respected all international decisions regarding the Western Sahara. The U.S. has always supported the right of self-determination and should do so for the Sahrawis as well. Indicating a readiness to contribute to a solution, Bouteflika concluded that the Western Sahara was a complex problem which Algeria could not shoulder the burden of resolving on its own.

17. (U) A/S Welch has cleared this message.  
ERDMAN